

Refereed research

**Islamic - secular dialogue in Arab world
between the crisis of communication
and the revival of violence**

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Introduction

Arab political sphere has witnessed a number of debates between Islamists and secularists. The aim was to build bridges of communication between two actors who contributed to all the transformations experimented by the Arab world. Despite the multiple dialogues between Islamists and secularists, the conflict and tension has prevailed between the two sides, where the conflict has reached the violence in all its material and moral forms. One of the most important signs of the communication crisis is the emergence of violence. So, in this study, we will start with Habermas's basic idea which focuses on violence as a disease of human discourse and communication; that violence is the result of distorted discourse between fundamentalists and others; it is a distorted discourse because it does not recognize the other as it is. Accordingly, we shall invoke the Habermasian theory of communication to understand the causes of violence escalation in Arab political sphere. Therefore, we begin by defining Habermas communicative act as a central concept.

Habermas grew up and lived in Germany and was affected by the disasters of Nazism and World War II, where violence has prevailed in all its form. Therefore, in all his works, he will try to find ways to achieve the social integration rather than the conflict and tension, and the solution that he proposed is to build a public space to discuss all the issues that help to achieve understandings and consensus rather than conflict and violence. He founded his communicative project in his work "**The theory of communicative act**¹", but this proposition remains present in all other writings.

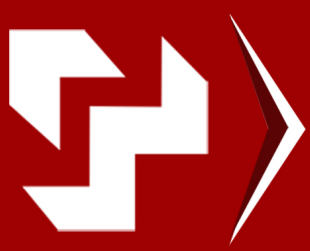
We begin to define the concept of the communicative act from the research in the field in which this act is carried out, so it is the public space, as Habermas puts it: "A group of people have agreed to discuss subjects of public interest or common interest."² It is a public and democratic political space open to all and ensures a debate and dialogue between various sensitivities, opinions and thoughts. Habermas believes that there is a strong relationship between democracy, communication and citizenship³. Thus, the process of communication can be successful only in the space of democracy, a space in which the equality of citizenship rights is achieved among all.

Public space allows the formation of a public opinion on the issues at hand, in the framework of a popular democracy that allows citizens to express their views. Habermas says that: "The principle on which the modern State is based is the idea of sovereign people, whose idea must be expressed in the form of public opinion." So, if we ignore this natural result, and if we did not make the

¹Jürgen Habermas, *Théorie de l'agir communicationnel*, traduction de Jeans Louis Schlegel, (Paris: Fayard, 1987).

² Nancy Fraser, «Repenser l'espace public : une contribution à la critique de la démocratie réellement existante,» dans: Emmanuel Renault et Yves Sintomer, dirs., *Où en est la théorie critique?* (Paris: La Découverte, 2003), p 103.

³ Mohammed Al-Ashhab, *Political Philosophy at Habermas: The Controversy of Modernity, Legitimacy and Communication in the Space of Democracy*, Philosophical Books (Casablanca: Press of al-Najah al-Jadidah, 2006), p. 48.



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public opinion the source of the political authority of all operational decisions for the entire society, then the reality of modern democracy will remain unsubstantial⁴," so, it is the political communication when it becomes established in the State of law and rights⁵.

Every citizen has the right to enter this space, but at condition to abandon somewhat of his own affiliations, and must transform from a common person to a citizen who shares this space with others. "This space is the kingdom in which individuals have agreed to contribute to public debates, that everyone can solve the issue at hand, and no one enters into public space with a privilege that no one else has⁶". This space can be achieved only in the context of participatory democracy. Habermas ultimate proposal to ensure equality of all members of society in the public discussion based on implementing neutral procedures. This alternative is seen by Habermas as the only solution capable of maintaining the universality of ethics⁷. Here, comes the challenge for Habermas idea; how the participants in argument can abandon their prejudices of themes rose by their cultural and moral milieu. It is a problem that will be presented to Habermas and sets out the conditions of communicative process within the theory of communicative act.

The theory of communicative act is a central concept of Habermas. He has defined the intent of communicative acts as: "Are those acts where the levels of action for the actors who belong to the communicational process, unrelated to the needs of politics, but linked to the deeds of understanding.⁸" The communicative act is distinguished from other acts that it does not seek to find means to influence others, but rather to seek an understanding and mutual consensus without any type of coercion or compulsion. Therefore, Habermas's communicative act is based on two main pillars:

First, there are basic conditions that must be available for communication process success, which is related to the modality of communication in addition to the conditions that we talked about, which belong to public space.

Secondly, the ultimate purpose of the communication process is to achieve understanding and consensus among the interlocutors on the issues at hand.

The first pillar is the conditions of the communicative process. The success of dialogue depends on respect for a range of requirements in the context of debate ethics. If the understanding is the ultimate purpose of the communicative act, so it cannot be imagined between the interlocutors,

⁴ Quoting: Ibid, p. 61.

⁵ Jürgen Habermas, *Droit et démocratie*, trad. Rainer Rochlitz (Paris: Fayard 1997), p. 189.

⁶ Al-Zahabi Mashrouhi, "The Legality of Power and the Legitimacy of Civil Disobedience at Habermas," in Habermas' Philosophy of Right (Rabat: Publications of Faculty of Arts and Humanities, 2008), p. 163.

⁷ Jürgen Habermas, *De l'éthique de la discussion: Que signifie le terme «Diskursethik»?*, trad. Marc Hunyadi (Paris: Ed. Cerf, Paris, 1992), p. 10.

⁸ Jürgen Habermas, *Théorie de l'agir communicationnel*, trad. J. M. Ferry, 2 tomes (Paris: Fayard, 1987), tome 1, p. 10



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except on the conditions of the most important not to affect one part in another, because that would inevitably leads to the failure of communication. In this context, Habermas says:

"The activity of mutual understanding is the subject to a basic condition by which the concerned parties achieve a draft of their common consensus ... They seek to avoid two dangers: the first is the failure of mutual understanding and misunderstanding; the second is the failure of act and the total failure. The displacement of first danger is a necessary condition for avoiding the second."⁹

Even if the conditions for public space are met, and even if the intention of interlocutors is to reach consensus, the process of communication may fail, if each party tries to influence the other party without convincing it. "It is impossible to start the processes of understanding in order to reach a consensus with the participation in the interaction, and at the same time to influence it, in the sense that it is actually practiced on a casual basis," says Habermas.

From the point of view of those concerned, a consensus cannot be imposed and cannot be accepted by one party under the coercion of the other party, either as a tool or with direct interventions, or in a strategic manner by influencing one another¹⁰."

Even if the resulting understanding succeeded, it would be temporary agreement to be breached as soon as a party discovers that it is under an influential factor such as lying for example. Otherwise, the understanding that lasts is based on persuasion and argumentation foundations. In addition, the understanding between interlocutors requires three conditions in the demands of reference: a correct and accurate language and honest statements; but as we have said with regard to the independence of public space, the problem arises again about the actor's relationship in regards with the environment.

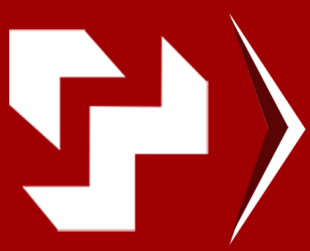
Habermas has responded to this objection by emphasizing that it is impossible to isolate the interlocutors from their surroundings, but the understanding and the argumentation between them remains the most important factors. Otherwise, we move from the understanding to the agreement resulting from the factor of influence. Any understanding based on a real reality, it constitutes **culture, society** and **personality**¹¹.

So, Habermas' solution is to agree on common norms among group members that facilitate the communication process. Thus, everyone's commitment to these values leads to the commitment of compliance and makes the individual integrated into his social group. Habermas proposed the

⁹ From: Salim Yafout, "Habermas Communication Philosophy," Hurriyat newspaper, electronic edition, (June 1, 2013). <<http://www.hurriyatsudan.com>>.

¹⁰ Jürgen Habermas, *Logique des sciences sociales et autre essais* (Paris: Presse universitaire de France, 2005), p. 417.

¹¹ Ibid, p.p. 435-436



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following rules:

1. Anyone who is able to speak and do has a full share in the debate.
2. Anyone has the right to raise any form of objection or object to any assertion whatsoever, this right shall include the right of belief in opinions and express it.
3. It is not permissible to prevent any of the interlocutors from discussing or to use any of compulsion means on it¹².

In addition to the above rules, Habermas added two other rules in form of two presumptions that the normative affirmations of validity include cognitive significance, and can be treated as affirmations of truth, the need to enter into a real discussion of the establishment of norms and orders based on the continuous and conversational mind rather on the individual mind.¹³

Based on these values that must be agreed upon, the objective of Habermas is to achieve agreement on cosmic standards founded rationally by arguing, but Charles Taylor believed that this consensus is not possible with the dominance of self-ethics inside the modern societies, as each of us adopts ethical positions for reasons purely subjective, so the mind loses the role of judgment within ethical debates¹⁴.

As for the second pillar, as long as the communicative act is directed towards understanding, the verbal act should be judged as an acceptable provision when that understanding is achieved¹⁵. Habermas, therefore, did not call for the establishment of ethical norms for the debate, which stemmed from the self as Kant did and the philosophical concept in general; Habermas sought out to make a theoretical study of peaceful methods and procedures that enable the self-interacting to develop those ethical norms through dialogue¹⁶. In this sense, the practical debate becomes "an instrument of essential importance in the enactment and justification of norms, because justification is a deliberative, autonomous process that is not separate from the consensus¹⁷."

Habermas has distinguished between the consensus and the understanding; **the first** can occur under the influence; **the second** is the objective of the communicative process which can occur through persuasion and argumentation. Understanding is a communicative beneficial consensus that has a rational basis because it is based on common convictions¹⁸. "Understanding means the consent of participants to communicate through the reference of a statement, while the

¹² Jürgen Habermas, *Morale et communication* (Paris: Flammarion, 1986), p. 111.

¹³ Mohamed Nouredine Afaya, *Modernism and Communication in Contemporary Critical Philosophy* (Beirut, Casablanca: The Arab Cultural Center 1991), p. 206.

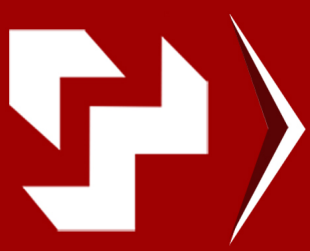
¹⁴ Charles Taylor, *Le Malaise de la modernité* (Paris: Cerf, 1994), p. 26.

¹⁵ Habermas, *Logique des sciences sociales et autres essais*, p. 430.

¹⁶ Jürgen Habermas, *L'Éthique de la discussion*, trad. de l'Allemand par Mark Hunyadi (Paris: Cerf, 1992), pp. 35-36.

¹⁷ Yafout, "Theory of Philosophy of Communication at Habermas.

¹⁸ Habermas, *Théorie de l'agir communicationnel*, p. 295.



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consensus means the self-recognition of reference of demands declared by the speaker¹⁹." Thus, understanding is an agreement on the social and ethical norms that governs a society rather than merely a verbal agreement. Meanwhile, the language is the instrument to achieve this understanding among the selves. The objective of Habermas' philosophy is to achieve a consensus instead of disagreement in the contemporary philosophical concept. "Habermas thinks reasonably, that democracy cannot be reduced to settling a dispute, as there is no citizenship without a consensus," says Alain Touraine²⁰.

The ultimate objective of Habermas' communicative process is to achieve consensus among the interlocutors, but taking into account that the starting point is the disagreement and conflict between the interlocutors²¹. Habermas recognizes that there is a disagreement as a starting point for each dialogue, but the dialogue must lead to consensus. Here Habermas's theory was criticized as the fact that as long as the communicative process involves multiple actors whether limited or not, it is difficult to achieve a consensus between them, considering that disagreement is more capable of innovation than consensus and that the latter kills the creativity²². Despite these criticisms, the objective of Habermas theory is to achieve the terms of consensus through the following statement:

"Speak so that any other speaker can understand your words and be able to accept your opinion."²³

We conclude through this conceptualization that passing the violence and social conflict, and the protection of integration and social solidarity, require political communication that can only be achieved through a democratic public space that guarantees the freedom of expression and a proper communicative act that ensures the understanding through the respect for normative conditions of communication between the selves. Are these conditions available in Arab political sphere? Or is it the crisis of public space, intolerance and dogmatism that has fueled the violence in all its forms, which the Arab societies witness today?

This is the problematic that we will try to discuss in this study, and before that why do we rely on the theory of the communicative act of Habermas'?

Currently, we are living the violence and terrorism in all its forms in the Arab societies. Most of this violence exists between movements with contradictory references and ideologies. Every movement sees its opinion as true and uses all tools, even the armed ones, to impose its opinion

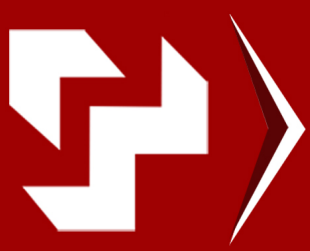
¹⁹ Habermas, *Théorie de l'agir communicationnel*, p. 133.

²⁰ Alain Touraine, *Critique de la modernité* (Paris: Ed. Fayard, 1992), p. 393.

²¹ Critics of this theory, Fritz Valner, to more reference: Fritz Valner, Introduction to Constructional Realism from the Philosophy of Fitzgiantin to Knowledge Science, translated by Ezz Al-Arab Hakim Bennani (Fas: Infoprint Press, 2001), p. 108.

²² See, Jean-François Lyotard, *La Condition postmoderne* (Paris: Minuit, 1979), p. 13.

²³ Al- Ash'hab, Political Philosophy at Habermas: The Debate of Modernity and Legitimacy and Communication in the Space of Democracy, p 39.



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on the other and society. So, this situation has result violence and counter-terrorism, violence that has started between Islamists and secularists since the 1970s. The dictatorial regimes have fueled the conflict and tension in some cases and practiced violence on another. Once these regimes fell, this violence returned to the front between both parties.

So, it is a matter of violence between movements with different convictions and references. Habermas provided us with the solution, which is to open the discussion and dialogue between these parties to agree on the constituents of required State. Therefore, we invoke Habermas communicative act theory, despite the different context, but it serves our objective in this study, which is to look for the causes of violence and terrorism outbreak. After the events of September 11, Habermas built a new vision to bring the two sides closer together. He raised a fundamental challenge: how to reconcile between faith and knowledge and between religion and reason in a post-secular society? He asks the following question: How can a modern mind that has separated from metaphysics understand its relationship to religion²⁴?

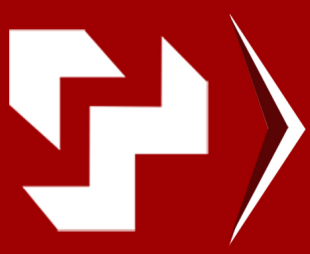
Hence, the solution is to open a public debate between the two parties with their freedom of expression, but to achieve consensus religious views must be translated into worldly language. In contrast, secular citizens should exercise self-criticism, as "civil democratic natures cannot be imposed on all citizens unless religious and secular people pass through supplementary educational programs²⁵. Here Habermas posed many questions about this dialogue:

1. Are secularists capable of tolerance and serious dialogue with the religious party, despite generations of contempt for religion?
2. Can secularists trust and believe that many of the conceptual secularism principles are liable to religion? Can they accept this religion publicly?
3. Are the parties willing to recognize that tolerance is always two-way? That is upon the clergy, not only among themselves but also with atheists and secularists, to enter into a dialogue of tolerance. On the contrary, the secular should not distance the religious people from the dialogue, all of this within the framework of respect for each other as free and equal members of meaningful political society for proper communication.

There have been many criticisms of this Habermasian recipe. How can religious citizens give up their religious convictions to participate in public debate? It is known that a religious citizen achieves his existence through his religious faith. With this in mind, Habermas distinguishes between ordinary citizens and politicians, as politicians are the ones who ought to follow this process. "If we accept this objection - which I find it potent—The liberal state that openly protects

²⁴ Jürgen Habermas, *Entre naturalisme et religion, les défis de la démocratie*, traduction par Christian Bouchindhomme et Alexandre Dupeyrix (Paris: Gallimard, 2008), p. 13.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 201.



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through fundamental rights guaranteeing freedom of religion, such forms of existence, the state cannot expect from all believers to justify or taking their political positions independently from their religious convictions. This provision can only be addressed to politicians who within the framework of the respective institutions are subject to the duty of neutrality in relation to the different visions of the world, as well as all who seek public mandate ²⁶."

Habermas has fallen into a clear contradiction between the recognition of believer's right to adhere to their religious beliefs in public debate, and between using these arguments with secularists who are not convinced with their theoretical framework, and demanding at the same time to take positions in public space independently of their religious convictions. There is also another contradiction. Habermas demanded not to exclude any citizen from the public space no matter his convictions are, but at the same time he has emphasized that professional religious citizens in politics are the only ones who are required to abandon their religious convictions in the public debate, and therefore they are the better to engage with secularists.

Despite these objections, Habermas solution remained applicable for our societies today in the context of violence that has become a threat to social cohesion. At least opening the dialogue between these parties under Habermas view may reduce the violence.

Our basic premise stems from the fact that the voice of violence in Arab political sphere has increased versus the silence of dialogue. The reason lies in the social and political structure that does not allow proper communication according to Habermasian approach. In addition to the structure of Arab political space, the crisis lies in interlocutors themselves, where all attempts of dialogue have failed for self-reasons related to the rejection and contempt of the other and the impossibility of coming into agreement about the required State. Arab political sphere has known many dialogues between Islamists and secularists. There is an intellectual dialogue between Hassan Hanafi and Muhammad Abed al-Jabri, whose contents is published in **"Dialogue of East and West"**²⁷ and between Muhammad Arkoun and Muhammad Salim al-'Awwa in **"The Political System in Islam"** ²⁸ which are intellectual dialogues that have reached disagreement. On the other hand, there is a political and ideological dialogue between the actors on both sides, in which understanding and consensus are absent, even if being done, it is temporary.

Tunisia has experimented the dialogue between Islamists and secularists that led to many outcomes within the framework of "October 18th Commission"²⁹." Morocco has also

²⁶ Ibid, p. 208.

²⁷ Hassan Hanafi and Mohammed Abed al-Jabri, Dialogue of East and West (Beirut: The Arab Foundation for Studies and Publication, 1990).

²⁸ Burhan Ghalyoun and Muhammad Salim al-'Awwa, The Political System in Islam, Dialogues for a New Century (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 2003).

²⁹ This organization includes the most important Tunisian opposition parties represented in Paris (the Conference for the Republic; Renaissance movement; Tunisian Workers' Communist Party; Democratic Union for Labor and Liberties; Nasserite Partisans). The most important human rights organizations in Tunisia (the Association of Families and Relatives of Political Prisoners; the committee for defense of liberties and human rights in Tunisia; Tunisian solidarity; National Council for Liberties in Tunisia; free voice). In addition to a number of independent faces active within the immigrant community and the Tunisian migration.



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experimented dialogues between Islamists and secularists, its contents published by Nishan magazine³⁰ and the book of “**Confrontations between Islamists and secularists**”³¹, In addition to a dialogue that bring together the intellectual and ideological sides in Cairo under the auspices of Arab center for Unity Studies, and under the name of National-Religious Dialogue in September 1989, where consensus emerged between intellectuals, but was absent between militants³².

These are the dialogues that will be the subject of analysis in this text we will try to rely on the methodology of discourse analysis to determine the extent the norms of the communicative act as defined by Habermas, is respected. Of course, there are many other dialogues but there is not enough space for it in this paper, BUT we tried hardly to represent these texts in our study, taking into account the diversity of fields from intellectual dialogue to ideological dialogue, and the multiple contexts from Cairo to Tunisia to Morocco with the difference of the nature of public space in these countries.

Based on Habermas communicative act theory, which adopts three basic pillars: providing a proper public space, dialogue on terms and criteria to ensure success, and consensus leading to understanding, we suggest the following plan:

- 1 - Public space in Arab world and distortion of communication.
- 2 - Islamic - secular dialogue and the absence of tolerance and dominance of contempt.
- 3 - Difficulty of understanding and fueling disagreements between Islamists and secularists in Arab world.

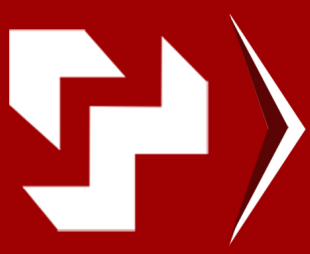
First: Public space in Arab world and distortion of communication

We concluded by studying Habermas communicative act theory that public space has two basic characteristics: first, a space in which democracy prevails and every citizen has the right to freely express his ideas without coercion or pressure. Secondly, it is a space in which the condition of independence is achieved where each interlocutor enters in isolation from its affiliations so that he can communicate with others.

³⁰ The dialogue was attended by Mustafa al-Khalfi, a researcher and editor-in-chief of Al-Tajdid newspaper, and Omar Ahrashan, a researcher and a leading member of the “Justice and Charity group.” Secularists were represented by Ahmed ‘Asid, a researcher, and Nur al-Din Zahi a researcher, and dialogue was conducted by Mohammed Darif. The contents of the dialogue are published in: "Islamists and Secularists Face to Face," e-magazine Hespress (June 30, 2008).

³¹ Confrontations between Islamists and secularists in Morocco, supervision and preparation of Mu'ti Munjeb, books of view; number 15 (Rabat: Kawthar Press, 2008).

³² The National-Religious Dialogue: Papers and Discussions of the Intellectual Symposium organized by the Center for Arab Unity Studies, the authors of the working papers Tariq al-Bishri [and others] (Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 1989).



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1 - The Crisis of democracy and freedom in Arab World

If democracy is meant by the way political power is exercised, which is based on two basic pillars: the respect for human rights and the right of free expression and the right to elect and monitor governors³³, but it remains as an unthinkable concept in Arab-Islamic culture³⁴. In Islamic political thought, we rarely find any particular chapters on Shura (consultation), democracy, or justice in the secular political sense of the word, while the meaning of Hereafter is strongly present³⁵. However, this absence in Arab and Islamic political culture does not mean that the concept cannot be realized today. The Quran and Sunna are basically encouraging Shura and justice, which can be the starting point for a new thought that can possibly establish the democracy and replace non-democratic regimes.

The non-democratic regimes in the post-independence countries in the Arab world have dominated from ocean to Gulf, and all attempts of political modernization have failed. Thus, the opinion of political leaders has dominated on everyone, the freedom of expression and the people's will have been violated with the use of democratic mechanisms superficially and pragmatically to ensure the continuation of dictatorship regimes.

In this undemocratic atmosphere, the State has, in the Arab context, restricted all attempts of dialogue between opponents, considering that its interest lies in their conflict rather than consensus and understanding. So, the State did not hesitate to repress both; Islamist opponents and secularists. This has shown that most of seminars and meetings between these parties were either secret or under foreign sponsorship. On the other hand, the leaders have inflamed conflicts and tensions between these movements, according to the tribalism concept of Ibn Khaldun.

In Morocco, for example, Islamic-secular dialogue over the past decades has been under the absolute rule and absence of democracy in political life which has enabled the power to exploit the conflict between two parties to present itself as the sole alternative to all other parties, and consequently to hold the major balances. The official policy in the religious and educational field has contributed to the intensive spread of Salafist thought and Islamic movements in face of leftist opposition and its various factions and movements. Otherwise, the State tries to use the left and modernist thought to restrain the religious extremism after it has become a threat to the power³⁶.

In Tunisia, the power faced the "October 18th Commission" movements, which were formed as a space for consensus and dialogue between secularists and Islamists, by using violence whether to

³³ Muhammad Abed Al-Jabri, *Issues in Contemporary Thought: Globalization - The Clash of Civilizations - Return to Ethics - Tolerance - Democracy and the Value System - Philosophy and the City, III* (Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 2007)

³⁴ Ibid, p. 71.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 73

³⁶ Ahmed 'Asid, "Islamic Secular Dialogue in Morocco: "Contraventions and Incentives," in: *Confrontations between Islamists and Secularists in Morocco*, p. 10.



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disperse the gatherings, or to prevent meetings of its members. In Egypt, space was more dictatorial where Islamists have been suppressed since Nasser's revolution, and then leftists have been suppressed under Sadat and Mubarak reign. Thus, dialogues were reduced between the parties.

2. Arab political sphere and the absence of independence

Here we will recall three thinkers who agreed on that Arab political sphere has lost its independence, despite their disagreement about the reason. They are Bertrand Paddy, Mohammad Abed al-Jabri and Abdullah al-'Arawi. Bertrand Paddy gave us some answers about the crisis of political communication in the Muslim world, which still applicable despite the strong social movement that the region has known. Paddy stressed that the reason for the success of European model is the independence of political sphere from other ones, as there is a historical process that resulted in the emergence of a new sphere in social life which is the political space for political practice; Competing the prince and the Church and presents itself as an alternative to them in political life. Here came the idea of a contract between the prince and people as a source of his legitimate power. In this context, the birth of political space was linked to the idea of contract, the superiority of law and the idea of representation to ensure that political sphere has gone beyond the religious sphere³⁷.

On the other hand, Islamic civilization did not know the independence of political sphere-according to Bertrand Paddy because Islamic city has remained linked to the prince, and has never aspired to form an independent special political space. Therefore, he doesn't give citizens the opportunity to train on living in urban communities, and the task of dividing the work that provided the modernity of the western city, and it is not a center for the formation of a bourgeoisie that aspires to perform a representative function or gradually practices the political power, as well as managing its demands and material interests. On the contrary, Islamic city has grown by reshaping the traditional tribal and sectarian groups on tribalism.³⁸

Mohammad Abed al-Jabri has criticized this conclusion and emphasized that it is not proved that the hypothesis of Church's establishment in Europe was the reason for the successful establishment of an independent political sphere and its absence in the Islamic world was the cause of failure. Then, many countries in Asia, Japan, for example, they have been developed despite having no church. Thus, there is even a more realistic explanation for the development in Europe: the conflict between the parties was internal, and there was no external intervention, as was the case in the Muslim world. However, the fear of the other at the level of memory - what is meant here by the other is Islamic world - pushed to the coalition and transformation, while in the

³⁷ Bertrand Paddy, *The Two States: State and Society in the West and Dar al-Islam*, translated by Nakhle Freifer (Beirut: Arab Cultural Center, 1996), pp. 22-23.

³⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 227-229



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Islamic world the external intervention has accompanied all the developments and affected it, since the Crusade to modern European expansion³⁹. This has been repeated presently with the revolutions that took place in several countries then the external intervention was a factor in the failure of transition processes to democracy.

On the other hand, al-Jabri has identified many determinants affecting the political behavior in the Arab-Islamic sphere, which hindered the development process:

A – The tribal trend: al-Jabri means by this the kinship and tribalism of Ibn Khaldun, as a political behavior depends on the relatives rather than experiment or democratic representation. Thus, belonging to a city, group, sect, or party is the only determination in the field of governance and politics.

B – The booty: It plays the role of economic factor in countries where the economy is based on land and rent taxes. The land taxes mean all that the State takes from the society, it is what powerful authority imposes on overwhelmed people of royalties and taxes. The rent taxes is any income that the person receives from his property or from the prince (Emir) without the need to perform any productive work.

C – The creed: is a determinant whether religious or ideological and take effect in terms of belief and approach. The content is not important here in the creed, but the important is the ability to move and mobilize. The creed directs the behavior of the believer leading him to commit suicide or demonstration, and sacrifices for the idea, whether religious or material⁴⁰.

Al-Jabri concluded that these determinants inhabit Arab political unconscious and the social imagination. Therefore, at every historical stage, it appears to obstruct any progress towards the development. Thus, the establishment of a democratic constitutional system requires renewing Arab political mind, and this will only be achieved by renewing its three determinants by replacing them with contemporary historical alternatives. The Modernist movements, which the Arab world has known, have merely suppressed these determinants and made them within the socio-political repression without exceeding them. The result is that with the setbacks and frustrations, these repressions have returned strongly, and the tribal, sectarianism and religious extremism have returned to dominate Arab sphere. Thus, to achieve development, the tribe must transform to a political and civil organization, and to transform the booty into a taxes economy and the creed into a mere opinion and the subordination of everyone to the law and State institutions⁴¹.

These repressions cited by Mohammad Abed Al-Jabri in his critical project of Arab political mind are still influential at the moment and disallow the communication and dialogue between

³⁹ Muhammad Abed al-Jabri, *The Arab Political Mind: Its Specificities and Implications*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: The Arab Cultural Center, 1991), p. 19.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 48-49.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.73.



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different parties in order to build a consistent vision on the project of building democracy and human rights.

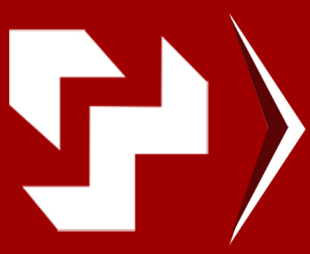
On the other hand, Abdullah al-'Arawi spoke of the need for independence of Moroccan political sphere to achieve any democratic transition. He said: "Democratic interpretation is basically the liberation of politics, saving it from whatever kind, higher or less precious than it, as well as separating it from any logic that does not suit it. So, by stripping politics of thought and action, of excesses and impurities, the other fields become liberated from politics, and all powers, talents and efforts will be directed to it. For example, the sport is the constant test of what human body can do, the art is a test of what imagination can do, the science is a test of what cleverness can do, the philosophy is the test of what reason can do, and the piety is a test of what willpower can do...etc. These fields are independent of politics and the latter is independent from them as well. Thus, this results in the genius and adaptation in both cases. Otherwise, if politics prevails over all, it will lead all to rock bottom⁴²." So, to ensure the nobility of politics, it is necessary that its field of practice to be independent otherwise it would be corrupted and would bear the diseases and impurities of other areas.

Abdullah al-'Arawi added that knowing the reality of power and the State in Islamic world requires understanding the raw material in which politics is conducted, that's to say the sense of knowing the psychology of the individual, and his idea about the rule and the State. Meanwhile, Abdullah al-Arwi argues that the image of the state is a result of an education that is not carried out by the State alone. Rather, those responsible are the family, the Imam in the mosque and the sheikh in the area, who are influenced by Islamic works and writings, in regard of the model State imagery which al-'Arawi called Islamic utopias.⁴³

However, through all of these studies, Arab political sphere is full of creed and ideologies, which make the dialogue between Islamists and secularists sterile. That, each interlocutor enters the debate with value judgments related to his ideological affiliations, while refusing to abandon them in the dialogue, and it is a condition that Habermas has already established for the success of the communicative process in public space. If the crisis of political communication here is linked to the dialogue space, which is characterized by the absence of democracy, freedom of expression, and by ideologies dominance, then the crisis is also a subjective crisis linked to interlocutors dominated by dogmatism, seclusion and rejection of tolerance.

⁴² Abdallah al-'Arawi, from the Bureau of Politics (Casablanca: Arab Cultural Center, 2009), p. 154

⁴³ Abdallah al-'Arawi, The Concept of the State, II (Casablanca: Arab Cultural Center, 1983), p. 121.



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Second: Islamic - secular dialogue absence of tolerance and domination of contempt

Through the follow-up of seminars and meetings in which there was the dialogue between secularists and Islamists in the Arab world, we concluded that the sarcastic style has prevailed between two parties. Islamists were calling secularists by atheists and outcasts, misguided and infidels. In contrast, secularists were calling Islamists by obscurants, ignorant, long-gone, and not-rationalists. We have seen how Habermas made the recognition of the other as it is; it is in fact a necessary condition for the success of the communicative process while rejecting all the words that offend the other.

In the National-Religious Dialogue, we find an idea used by Islamists in face of nationalists, namely that nationalism is imported for the purpose of fragmenting the Islamic Ummah (nation), and the socialism is a red march aimed at eliminating the remaining constituents of continuity and stability in Islamic countries, as well as the modernist slogans. Democracy and secularism are slogans imported to strike Muslims in their religion, inherited culture, identity and history. So, the solution is the inevitability of Islamic solution by the application of Islamic law⁴⁴. Tariq al-Bishri, one of the participants in this dialogue, stressed that the origin of secularism is the West, and those secularists remained aliens to Arab-Muslim societies, which have resisted foreign intervention according to an Islamic referential⁴⁵. It is a secular thought coming from the West which called the Islamists as those of inherited thought and the secularists as those of coming foreign thought. Islamic political trend tends to be by its basic value and composition nature against the tendency of Westernization⁴⁶. In the same context, Munir Shafiq has written in his book **“Responses to secular theses”** a violent attack on secularists, and on the “Westernized secular thought⁴⁷.”

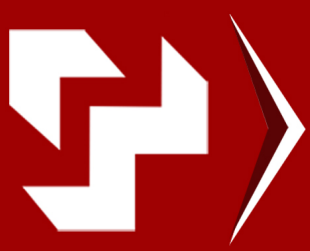
On the other hand, the secularists did not hesitate to mock Islam and exploit some of the violence and strive that Muslims history was known through linking Islamists and violence, especially in light of the terrorism practiced today by jihadist in many regions of the world. Faraj Fouda, for example, launched a violent attack on Muslims history and did not exclude even the era of Orthodox Caliphs, where he said in his book “Before the fall”: “... .. If this may be said about the reign of Orthodox Caliphs, so it is permissible to say what is more, when dealing with the analysis and criticism of later periods, where the banners of religious rule rose, and religious leaders claimed that it is the right Islam, and they are the preservers and conservatives of the book (Quran), and they are Sunna’s followers, and they nevertheless resort to killing unjustly and

⁴⁴ Positions taken by Radwan Al-Sayyed in his intervention: Radwan Al-Sayed: "The Nationalists and Islamists in the Arab World and the Needs of Dialogue and Convergence," Paper presented to: The National-Religious Dialogue: Papers and Discussions of the Intellectual Symposium organized by the Center for Arab Unity Studies, p. 78.

⁴⁵ Tariq al-Bishri, The Secular Islamic Dialogue (Cairo: Dar al-Shorouk, 2005), pp. 7-30

⁴⁶ Ibid, p.7

⁴⁷ Mounir Shafiq, Responses to secular theses, 3rd ed. (Beirut: The Publisher for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, 1992).



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unnecessarily, and they introduced subjects and thoughts into communities if the early days of Islam has known, would be unable to introduced it as a subject of the pre-Islamic era⁴⁸..”

This book was answered by Abdul Majid Sobh in his work “**Rush before the fall and the fall of the owner**,⁴⁹” and before Munir Shafiq has responded to him with his book “**Between the rise and the fall**” saying: "This has allowed Frederick Engels, for example, to justify everything has been used of brutal methods to establish a slavery system, because it is a historical necessity to emerge from the age of brutality⁵⁰," confirming that the history of Marxism is the history of violence, and he described the secularists as naive⁵¹.

In Morocco, Ahmad ‘Asid, a participant in Islamic-secular dialogue, accused Islamists of being undemocratic, by saying: "In our dialogue with Moroccan Islamists on the concept of democracy, we have said that they have a problem in using this concept for limited political objectives without believing in its values, principles and concepts⁵²," ‘Asid has also posed many provocative questions on Muslims interlocutor⁵³, such as:

1 - ... The moments depicted as a "golden age" of Islam, which is the stage of prophecy and Orthodox Caliphs, were also a stage of terrible wars and fierce fighting and great events and were not a stage of peace, civilization and prosperity?

2 - If the Qur’an contains copied texts that exceeded 1400 years ago by the recognition of scholars themselves, so why these texts remained memorized, told and explained so far? Does not this mean in the depth that it is not "copied" and that some Muslims have the right to consider it being a reference and adopt it in their behavior? What is the clear and explicit position of the texts used in terrorism and harming people and their interests? Why does a Muslim read you the positive verses, and hide others when he is in defense mode, and then surprise you with terrorist texts content once he becomes in power?

In the same context, one leftist says, condemning ALjama’s⁵⁴ exit from the 20th February movement: "I was not surprised by the exit of Justice and Charity Movement, as I was surprised by the metaphysical political alliance that took place between a medieval theocratic movement, and a movement which is for a short time present itself as a movement of modernity and openness⁵⁵." Thus, the Islamic project is a past project⁵⁶.

⁴⁸ Farah Fouda, *Before the Fall* (Cairo: Egyptian General Book Press, 1992), p.12

⁴⁹ Abdul Majid Sobh, "Rush before the fall and the fall of his author", (Mansoura: Dar al-Wafa, 1985).

⁵⁰ Mounir Shafiq, *Between the Rise and the Fall*, 3rd ed. (Beirut: The Publisher for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, d.), P. 57.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 99

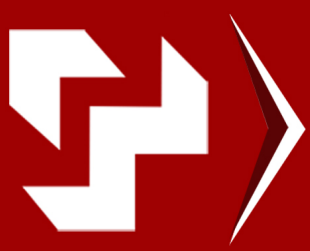
⁵² Ahmed ‘Asid, "A Look at Secularism," quoted by the Web site Hespress.

⁵³ Ahmed ‘Asid, "The Difficult Questions of Islam," *Urban Dialogue*, No. 2882 (1 August 2010).

⁵⁴ Justice and charity movement

⁵⁵ Mohamed Moqseidi, *The Reasons of Egression of Justice and Charity of the February 20 Movement*, *Urban Dialogue*, Issue 3595 (1 February).

⁵⁶ Ali Afkir, "Islamists, leftists and three poles," in: *confrontations between Islamists and secularists in Morocco*, p. 48.



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On the other hand, many Islamists have not hesitated to describe anyone who contradicts their views as being misguided and infidel. In his book “**Dialogue with the virtuous democrats,**” Abdul Salam Yassin describes his democrat interlocutors as follows: “... the virtuous democrats, whom we like to discuss on a one-level as with authoritarian rulers⁵⁷...” He adds: “Through the experiment in the sphere of conflict and the arena of politics, the soldiers of God (Jundullah) will meet, clash, and be faced with other calls which their education, organization, and project are proposed to the people on a different basis than the foundations that have made us for centuries a great nation. On the land of Muslims, those are the remnants cast of progressive revolutionary retirees, the widows of ideology who have lost their ideals of justice and the enthusiasm of their struggling sons has extinguished with the collapse of Soviet empires. Those in some Muslim countries are still with their insolence, the dullness of sense and the backwardness of thought, insisting on picking up the worn fabricated theses which its founders put forward in the dustbin of history, and to propose to the nation a trivial death rag blowing in it to become in the minds of dull public such as banners of victory⁵⁸.” These were the words that sever all ties of communication between the two parties.

We are in front of an intellectual debate that does not respect the other and uses all events to undermine it. This has influenced the ideological and political discourse among the strugglers from different directions, in which this debate has emerged strongly, turning in many cases from linguistic violence to direct physical violence. This has been witnessed in the past few years in the university arenas in the Arab world between the two sides. It is the era of confrontation, not the era of dialogue and communication.

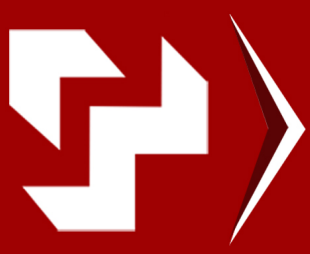
Third: The difficulty of understanding and fueling differences between Islamists and secularists

Understanding is at the centre of Habermas theory of communicative act, but there is a huge difference between the consensus which is the descendant of understanding and the influence that is the descendant of coercion and pressure. This raises the question of modality to achieve the understanding between parties with fundamental reference differences, as in the case of dialogue between Islamists and secularists. Habermas emphasizes that to reconcile multiple cultures within this communication there are three directions to resolve the problem of conflict:

- 1 - Subjecting multiculturalism to the criteria of State consultative management through dialogue, with the constant search for consensuses and balances whenever the balance of power between cultures is disrupted.
2. To demand a review of the heritage and traditions in order to be open towards the other and to practice self-criticism, which makes the culture of the majority interacts with the minority cultures.

⁵⁷ Abdul Salam Yassin, *Dialogue with the Virtuous Democratic* (Casablanca: Horizon Publications, 1994), p.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 15



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3. To achieve intercultural coexistence, all citizens must be mutually recognized in a single political culture, namely, the democratic consultative culture.

4. The need to always reach middle-ground solutions among different cultures; solutions should be based on rational principles that meet the interests of all through discussion, dialogue and debate⁵⁹.

We will focus here on two main themes: 1) the relationship between religion and politics and freedom; 2) the extent of interlocutors' ability to understand the meaning.

1 - The relationship between religion and politics

Arab political space has witnessed a loud debate about the relationship of religion in regard to politics, where Islamists hold a fundamental role of religion in political life; secularists consider the presence of religion in politics as a danger to the democratic values. According to Burhan Ghalyoun, Islamists emphasized the inevitable and natural link between Islam as religion and Islam as a system of ruling. The believer in that sense does not complete his faith unless he unites his worship practices with his worldly practices.

The rationalist doctrine holds that Islam is a religion concerning the relationship between the believer and his Lord and that political systems are alien to Islam, and thus the believer has the right to choose rationally the political system he wishes⁶⁰.

In the context of intellectual dialogue on this subject, two prominent Arab intellectuals, Hassan Hanafi and Muhammad Abed al-Jabri, launched this dialogue and reached a similar result, although not without paradoxes. Hassan Hanafi concluded that "Islam is a secular religion in its essence, and therefore it does not need an additional secularism derived from Western civilization⁶¹." Al-Jabri then agreed that "secularism, in the sense of separating religion from the State⁶², has no sense in Islam, because there is no church to be separated from the State." Perhaps, the reason for this relative consensus is the ideological convergence between the two intellectuals, as Hassan Hanafi is classified within Islamic Left, and Mohammad Abed al-Jabri is one of the leftists who made a renewed reading of Islamic heritage.

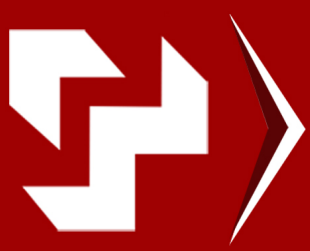
Burhan Ghalyoun and Mohammad Salim al-'Awwa continued this intellectual dialogue in their book "**The Political System in Islam.**" The first has emphasized that political and social organization requires modern rational rules to prevent differences and solve problems. However, this does not mean that Islam as a religion is against these rational rules, with the distinction

⁵⁹ Ali Abboud Al-Mohamadawi, *The Political Problem of Modernity from Self-Philosophy to Communication Philosophy: Habermas as a Model* (Rabat: al- Ikhtilaf Publications, Dar Al-Aman, 2011), pp. 326-327.

⁶⁰ Ghalyoun and al-'Awwa, *The Political System In Islam*, p. 94.

⁶¹ Hanafi and al- Jabri, *Dialogue of the East and the West*, p. 38.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 44.



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between Islam as a text (Qur'an) and Islam as jurisprudence, used in many periods to produce autocratic systems opposed to democracy. Then, what is required of Islamic movements today is to carry out self-criticism and to review the text in order to build a true democracy that conforms to the time's requirements, but on the condition that this intellectual jurisprudence remains relative and not absolute and holy. Thus, these movements will succeed in moving from the level of political practice attached to the religious call to the level of intellectual call that establishes a new human and rational democratic policy⁶³.

Mohammad Salim al-'Awwa, has started from the point of view that Islam as a text does not include a specifically detailed regime that Muslims must adhere and stand at its limits in all ages, but the intended Islam as a religion and a State is the acceptance of general Islamic reference, which allows the opinions, plurality and diversity in the political affair. He concluded that all or most of the political issue is a matter of judgmental supposition, and so it requires a renewed jurisprudence in every age to achieve public interests⁶⁴.

Here it is clear that there is a consensus among thinkers, but it is not without disagreements. It is a consensus between Islamic democratic and rational democratic thinkers according to Burhan Ghalyoun. The latter points out that we should not continue to keep attached to the imaginary Islamic State even in terms of bringing its concept closer to the modern democracy concept and its pluralistic values, because this will lead to emptying democracy of its content. Then, the solution is that freedom becomes the principle ruling the moral and political life⁶⁵. On the other hand, we saw Mohammad Salim al-'Awwa has called Burhan Ghalyoun to reconsider some concepts such as the "herd mentality", "freeze of mind and burying conscience" and freeing from the principles of European intellectual criticism of the effects of ecclesiastical control in the Middle Ages and projecting it on the Muslim community.⁶⁶

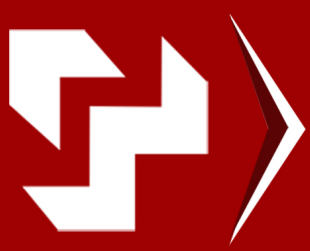
As for the political dialogue between the two parties, within the framework of the October 18th Commission in Tunisia, which we talked about earlier, we find a consensus within the movement on the relationship between the State and religion, although this came in general, the movement stated : " Faced with these challenges the movement of October 18th is committed to defending the vision of relationship between the State and religion and identity which benefits from the creative interaction between the constituents of our Arab Islamic civilization and the modern human gains, especially human rights, collective and individual freedoms, as a prerequisite for progress, development and dignity ... It is the duty of required democratic State to give Islam a privileged status, as being the religion of the majority of people without any monopoly or exploitation, with guaranteeing the right of all beliefs and convictions and protecting the freedom

⁶³ Ghalyoun and al- 'Awwa, "The Political System in Islam", p. 96.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 117

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 261

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 270



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of performing religious rites⁶⁷." However, it is a relative consensus, imposed by the conditions of confrontation with the regime. Once the regime of Ben Ali fell, each party returned to its old slogans, Islamic solution versus secular solution. Perhaps what has lessened the value of this consensus was that many movements of secular and Islamic parties have refused to participate in the movement, and did not comply with its decisions. However, the dialogue under the movement was training for the two parties that have facilitated the consensus process in national dialogue after the revolution.

In the National-Religious Dialogue seminar in Cairo and its relation to the application of Shari'a, Mohammad 'Amara emphasized that secularism and application of the positive foreign law were due to the colonial powers intervention. Therefore, it is time for all, Muslims and secularists to demand the application of Islamic law to achieve national independence and to restore the legitimacy and legality of natural nation law⁶⁸. Otherwise, this does not mean that the Islamic State is a religious State as it was in Middle- Ages in Europe, and is not a secular civil State as it is in the modern European era. It is a civil Islamic State, and the people are the source of authorities in terms of adhering the Sharia, and the law should not permit illegal acts or forbid legal acts⁶⁹. In the same direction, Mohammad Salim al-'Awwa stressed that Islamic peoples demand the application of Islamic law, and the solution is the elections and ballot boxes⁷⁰.

On the other hand, in the same dialogue, Abdul-Ilah Balqiziz responded to Islamists ideas, that certainly, the objective of demanding the application of Islamic law is purely to achieve political gains. This explains that most of Islamists who were integrated into the political game in the Arab world have abandoned this requirement once they reached the political institutions. Nevertheless, the fundamental problem is the problem of determining Sharia, is it the Holy Qur'an that cannot be amended? Or the Islamic jurisprudence that is not yet able to employ the reason in dealing with the text⁷¹?

Al-Jabri confirmed this assertion and affirmed that demanding for Shari'a application is a purely political demand. He stressed also that the application of Shari'a provisions should take into consideration the reasons of enacting these provisions, and as long as these reasons are abandoned in the current era, so there is no need to apply them. He cited the rule of Mahdi Ben Tumert, who worked on the application of these provisions, which led to chaos in the State. Therefore, the Caliph al-Muwahidi Abdel Mo'men was compelled to replace the provisions by other sanctions according to Jurists consulting⁷².

⁶⁷ A statement issued by the movement, December 10, 2009.

⁶⁸ Mohammed 'Amara, among the issues for discussion, in: *The National-Religious Dialogue: Papers and Discussions of the Intellectual Symposium* organized by the Center for Arab Unity Studies, p. 201.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 202

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 207

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 203

⁷² *Ibid*, p. 206



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The position was not very different in Morocco between the two sides, where secularists have accused Islamists being considering their reference as absolute because it is based on the religion which is a transcendent divine source. This has made the religion the sole reference to proceed⁷³. Therefore, religion and politics must be separated, and religion must, therefore, emerge from the political sphere in general and become a special matter⁷⁴.

Furthermore, Moroccan Islamists see religion as having a role in public life, as well as a role in private life, and this role is not done through coercion. These movements also demanded to reconsider Shari'a as a source of legislation. They asserted that each society has its own constants, from which the so-called law-making authorities are drawn. Therefore, secularists are required to abandon the idea that secularism is the solution, and religion cannot be neutralized in religious societies⁷⁵. Moreover, they demanded also to remove the Principality of the Faithful and to free scholars from subordination to the royal institution in order to have a free voice. Shari'a is, therefore, the primary source of legislation, with a distinction between the advocacy area, which should not be exploited in politics, and the field of running the State affairs as a humanitarian matter not related to holiness⁷⁶.

In the same movement, Abdul Salam Yassin saw that "secularism is generally the separation of religion from the State, and this means finally to rule according to the human soul's desires which unite by consensus or maybe the half, the third and less. Secularism is closely related to democracy, as being its encouragement, face, support and necessity⁷⁷."

Thus, within this debate, secularists saw the use of religion in politics as incompatible with the rules of democracy. On the other hand, Islamists believed that religion is the basis of politics practice in Islamic society, which means that the understanding has not been achieved on the relationship between religion and politics and the State, that each party has only expressed its natural positions consistent with its authority without making any concessions, taking into account that academic intellectual debate led to relative consensus as we have seen.

2. The Debate about the concept of freedom

In the aforementioned "National-Religious Dialogue" seminar, we find some sort of consensus between interlocutors about the demand for political freedom, because two sides have suffered from despotism⁷⁸. In his speech, Rashed al-Ghannouchi called to consider the freedom as a sacred

⁷³ Asid, *The Islamic Secular Dialogue in Morocco: Obstacles and Incentives*.

⁷⁴ Nur al-Din al-Zahi, in: "Islamists and Secularists Face to Face," e-magazine Hesperis (June 30, 2008).

⁷⁵ Mustafa al- Khalfi, in: *Ibid*.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*.

⁷⁷ Yassin, *Dialogue with the virtuous democrats*, p. 19.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*.



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principle and reject political despotism in all its ideological forms and types⁷⁹. Moreover, Fahmi Howedi called for making the issue of freedom and human rights an area around which the two sides fight despotism. This is a consensus that is almost the only point of convergence in the dialogue between the two parties in the Arab world. However, this consensus remains a procedural consensus required by the conditions of confrontation with existing regimes.

The struggle between both parties has been intensified about the meaning of freedom; Secularists have accused Islam of being against freedom, while Islamists believed that freedom in its Western sense is alien to Islamic culture and therefore must be limited; to be a freedom within the framework of Sharia. Furthermore, Islamic political thought has addressed this point in great detail since ancient times. In this context, Tariq al-Bishri says: "Freedoms and rights as enshrined in international covenants and statutes are relative rights that should stand at the limits of the absolute religious constants, namely the subordination of relative to the absolute⁸⁰."

In the Islamic-secular dialogue in Morocco, secularists asserted that "freedoms are civil and not absolute, so they are limited because no one has the right to be free to the degree of prejudice to the right of others. It is not our right to set limits on freedom unless it affects the freedom of others ... The religious ideology espoused by political Islam is not entirely compatible with democracy and human rights since this ideology is based on absolute Shari'a. Therefore, the establishment of laws as a rule of democracy is impossible, because God has enacted all rules, as well as Islamic ideology, relies on religious discrimination, which is contrary to human rights⁸¹."

Islamists have tried to respond to secularists' claims, especially with regard to freedom of belief and women's freedom. Certainly, "freedom of belief is one of the strongest elements of Islam. Even the Prophet's saying (Hadith), about the apostate's sanction, was a talk about the "pervert of religion, who left the group," namely that is related to a certain political context, the so-called high treason⁸²." With regard to the rights of women, Islamists believed that they are definitively defined in strict and explicit religious texts. Therefore, it is not permissible to resort to other foreign references in cases that "Individual liberties do not mean forests, and public morality is not stereotyped because stereotyping society means despotism⁸³."

Abdul Salam Yassin said about human rights: "...The solution is not to import the idea of human rights that we have not attended its birth and a law that has not been raised in our bosom history, and it is not a law descended from our Lord nor a curriculum from our prophet⁸⁴." He adds:

⁷⁹ Rashed Ghannouchi »Discussions, within: The National-Religious Dialogue: Papers and Discussions of the Intellectual Symposium organized by the Center for Arab Unity Studies, p. 268.

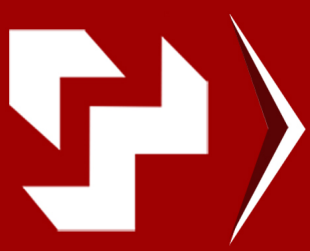
⁸⁰ Al- Bishri, Islamic Secular Dialogue, p. 103

⁸¹ Mohammed Al-Hilali, »Religious Ideology: Democracy and Human Rights? Elements of Critical and Political Thinking, "in: Confrontations between Islamists and Secularists in Morocco, p. 60.

⁸² Mustafa al- Khalfi, in: "Islamists and Secularists Face to Face."

⁸³ Omar Ahrashan, *ibid*.

⁸⁴ Yassin, Dialogue with the Virtuous Democrats, p. 218.



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“Human rights in the global discourse are the holiest sanctities –in speech and protest - in the religion of democracy ... so every talk about human rights if it does not document the issue in the covenant of honoring promises it is in fact a political complement⁸⁵.” He asserts about democracy “...If the democracy they call (namely the educated class) does not know Islam, and we are not meeting anyone except on Islam, so is there anyone blessed with the virtue of knowledge, the virtue of love and freedom as well as the virtues of religion to have a meeting with him?⁸⁶.”

Then, through addressing these controversial topics between secularists and Islamists, it is clear that what governs the relationship between the two parties is the conflict and confrontation, which made a few moments of dialogue, and even this debate, was often transformed into a reciprocal accusation, making the idea of accepting the other as impossible. Nonetheless, the moments of dialogue between two parties have always formed in the parties strategies, moments to provoke the followers and strugglers and not to convince the other party by the thought. The ultimate objective of each party is to convince the public of its opinion and not to convince the other. So, this has contributed the extremist ideas. One of the participants in dialogue says: "Let's be clear: there is no consensus between Islamists and secularists. Democracy is a project; how to protect it? Is it possible to agree on a modern political project based on democracy in all its dimensions? So do not dream of consensus⁸⁷."

In the symposium of “National – Religious Dialogue”, Essam al-‘Arian said that the debate did not lead to a convergence of views on the subject, but there are those words brought back the debate years ago, as if any accumulation has not been achieved in these dialogues, where the suspicion and mistrust were prevailing between the two parties⁸⁸. Tariq al- Bishri has emphasized on the same idea at the same seminar by saying “when the objections are repeated dozens of times, and the clarification is repeated dozens of times on Shari’a application, this will not only be boring but may raise the sense of dialogue futility⁸⁹.” Here secularists and Islamists agreed on a single point: the impossibility of understanding and consensus.

However, on the other hand we have seen that there is a relative consensus emerged among intellectuals in the dialogue that took place between Mohammad Abed al-Jabri and Hassan Hanafi, and between Burhan Ghalyoun and Mohammad Salim al- ‘Awwa, where consensus has emerged on many points. As that convergence is also possible whenever it is about practical issues to resolve crises, but as much as the dialogue focuses on theoretical and ideological abstracts, the division becomes deeper⁹⁰. Thus, a part of Islamists and a part of secularists have managed to be

⁸⁵ Yassin, *Dialogue with the Virtuous Democrats*, p. 239.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 4.

⁸⁷ Symposium: “Islamists and Secularists Face to Face.”

⁸⁸ *The National-Religious Dialogue: Papers and Discussions of the Intellectual Symposium* organized by the Center for Arab Unity Studies, p. 230

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 250.

⁹⁰ Al- Bishri, *Islamic Secular Dialogue*.



Islamic - secular dialogue in Arab world between the crisis of communication and the revival of violence

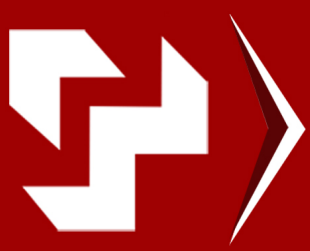
in agreement with the government of Ben Kairan in Morocco on the government project, despite the different references.

In order to achieve this absent consensus in the dialogue between Islamists and secularists, Mohammad Abed al-Jabri has presented the methodology as follows: "If the philosopher wants to discuss the issues of religion, he must first recognize the principles of religion. If the scholar wants to discuss the issues of any philosophy, he must first recognize the principles on which this philosophy was built ... in this way the philosopher can understand religion within the religion itself, and the scholar can understand philosophy within philosophy⁹¹." Thus, Habermas's condition for the success of communication is achieved when each side borrows other's mind to understand and recognize it as it does with its beliefs and values.

Otherwise, Wajih Kawtharani also spoke about the necessity of "abandoning the controversial approach of some Islamist parties, and some national parties who make the slogan a means of intimidation. It is a controversy produced by the fear about the destiny and identity; it is a result of the failure of past experiences. Therefore, we must work to accommodate our history conclusions within a kind of historical awareness, rather than offering magic solutions to solve problems whether it is secular or Islamic⁹²." This is the methodology that must be followed to reach understandings between the parties on controversial issues, considering that the challenges are the same for all parties. It is the building of the democratic State, which has been postponed in Arab political sphere.

⁹¹ Mohammad Abed Al-Jabri, *We and Heritage*, 6th ed. (Casablanca: The Arab Cultural Center, 1993), p. 236.

⁹² *The National-Religious Dialogue: Papers and Discussions of the Intellectual Symposium* organized by the Center for Arab Unity Studies, p. 215



Conclusion

We conclude this study with five main conclusions:

1 - The concept of democracy in Arab political sphere was absent, and freedom of expression has disappeared as well, which has led to narrowing the dialogue between Islamists and secularists. Indeed, the existing regimes have tried to achieve their balances on the conflict and tension between the two parties, thus making them create strife and confrontation.

2 - Politicians in the Arab world have not succeeded in ensuring the independence of political sphere from other spheres, as was the case in modern countries. Thus, ideologies of various kinds, religious and secular have dominated, which distorted the communication between the two parties.

3 - The study of various dialogues between Islamists and secularists in the Arab world has revealed the prevalence of cynicism, contempt and absence of tolerance between the two parties. This has prevented the realization of communication act conditions, as defined by Habermas, namely recognition of the other.

4. If understanding is Habermas' ultimate objective of communication to overcome existing crises, the dialogue between Islamists and secularists was marked by the closure, as both sides have been unable to emerge from the dogmatic fence in which they live. So, instead of considering the dialogue as an instrument of understanding to establish the democratic State, it has become a tool to incite followers and fuel strife and violence in all its forms.

5. The root cause of violence escalation in Arab political sphere is the absence of rational dialogue constituents between the conflicting parties. After the witnessed social movement in the region, many countries entered into cycles of conflict and civil wars. Thus, the language of the dialogue was replaced by the language of weapons. Several countries, such as Tunisia and Morocco, have succeeded in securing a kind of relative social peace. One of the contributing factors is the opening dialogue between Islamic and secular parties. Eventhough the parties cannot agree on various issues, and the conflict and verbal and physical violence still continuing, but it may be considered as an opportunity for the parties to train on debating in both countries, which may contribute to the success of transformation. Can the parties in other countries take lessons?